

1994 Mercedes-Benz E500 (Model ID 124.036) not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards is substantially similar to a 1994 Mercedes-Benz E500 originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States and certified under 49 U.S.C. 30115, and is capable of being readily altered to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30141 (a)(1)(A) and (b)(1); 49 CFR 593.8; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: July 19, 1996.

Marilynne Jacobs,

Director, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance.

[FR Doc. 96-18955 Filed 7-24-96; 8:45 am]

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[Docket No. 96-75; Notice 1]

Notice of Receipt of Petition for Decision That Nonconforming 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe Passenger Cars Are Eligible for Importation

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of petition for decision that nonconforming 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe passenger cars are eligible for importation.

SUMMARY: This notice announces receipt by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of a petition for a decision that 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe passenger cars that were not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards are eligible for importation into the United States because (1) they are substantially similar to vehicles that were originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States and that were certified by their manufacturer as complying with the safety standards, and (2) they are capable of being readily altered to conform to the standards.

DATES: The closing date for comments on the petition is August 26, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to the docket number and notice number, and be submitted to: Docket Section, Room 5109, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590. [Docket hours are from 9:30 am to 4 pm]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: George Entwistle, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, NHTSA (202-366-5306).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A) (formerly section 108(c)(3)(A)(i)(I) of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act (the Act)), a motor vehicle that was not originally manufactured to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards shall be refused admission into the United States unless NHTSA has decided that the motor vehicle is substantially similar to a motor vehicle originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States, certified under 49 U.S.C. 30115 (formerly section 114 of the Act), and of the same model year as the model of the motor vehicle to be compared, and is capable of being readily altered to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Petitions for eligibility decisions may be submitted by either manufacturers or importers who have registered with NHTSA pursuant to 49 CFR Part 592. As specified in 49 CFR 593.7, NHTSA publishes notice in the Federal Register of each petition that it receives, and affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on the petition. At the close of the comment period, NHTSA decides, on the basis of the petition and any comments that it has received, whether the vehicle is eligible for importation. The agency then publishes this decision in the Federal Register.

G&K Automotive Conversion, Inc. of Santa Ana, California ("G&K") (Registered Importer No. R-90-007) has petitioned NHTSA to decide whether 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe passenger cars are eligible for importation into the United States. The vehicles which G&K believes are substantially similar are the 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe that were manufactured for importation into, and sale in the United States, and certified by their manufacturer, Daimler Benz, A.G., as conforming to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The petitioner contends that it carefully compared the non-U.S. certified 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe to their U.S. certified counterparts, and found those vehicles to be substantially similar with respect to compliance with most applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

G&K submitted information with its petition intended to demonstrate that the non-U.S. certified 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-

Benz S600 Coupe, as originally manufactured, conform to many Federal motor vehicle safety standards in the same manner as their U.S. certified counterparts, or are capable of being readily altered to conform to those standards.

Specifically, the petitioner claims that the non-U.S. certified 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe are identical to their U.S. certified counterparts with respect to compliance with Standards Nos. 102 *Transmission Shift Lever Sequence* * * *, 103 *Defrosting and Defogging Systems*, 104 *Windshield Wiping and Washing Systems*, 105 *Hydraulic Brake Systems*, 106 *Brake Hoses*, 107 *Reflecting Surfaces*, 109 *New Pneumatic Tires*, 113 *Hood Latch Systems*, 116 *Brake Fluid*, 124 *Accelerator Control Systems*, 201 *Occupant Protection in Interior Impact*, 202 *Head Restraints*, 203 *Impact Protection for the Driver From the Steering Control System*, 204 *Steering Control Rearward Displacement*, 205 *Glazing Materials*, 206 *Door Locks and Door Retention Components*, 207 *Seating Systems*, 209 *Seat Belt Assemblies*, 210 *Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages*, 211 *Wheel Nuts, Wheel Discs and Hubcaps*, 212 *Windshield Retention*, 216 *Roof Crush Resistance*, 219 *Windshield Zone Intrusion*, and 302 *Flammability of Interior Materials*.

Petitioner also contends that the vehicles are capable of being readily altered to meet the following standards, in the manner indicated:

Standard No. 101 *Controls and Displays*: (a) inscription of the word "Brake" on the brake failure indicator lamp lens; (b) placement of the appropriate symbol on the seat belt warning lamp; (c) recalibration of the speedometer/odometer from kilometers to miles per hour.

Standard No. 108 *Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment*: (a) installation of U.S.- model headlamp assemblies and front sidemarkers; (b) installation of U.S.- model taillamp assemblies which incorporate rear sidemarkers; (c) installation of a high mounted stop lamp.

Standard No. 110 *Tire Selection and Rims*: installation of a tire information placard.

Standard No. 111 *Rearview Mirrors*: replacement of the passenger side rear view mirror, which is convex, with a U.S.- model component.

Standard No. 114 *Theft Protection*: installation of a buzzer microswitch in the steering lock assembly, and a warning buzzer.

Standard No. 115 *Vehicle Identification Number*: installation of a

VIN plate that can be read from outside the left windshield pillar, and a VIN reference label on the edge of the door or latch post nearest the driver.

Standard No. 118 Power Window Systems: rewiring of the power window system so that the window transport is inoperative when the ignition is switched off.

Standard No. 208 Occupant Crash Protection: installation of a seat belt warning buzzer. The petitioner states that the vehicles are equipped with an automatic restraint system consisting of driver's and passenger's side air bags and knee bolsters. The petitioner further states that the vehicles are equipped with Type 2 seat belts in the front and rear outboard designated seating positions, and with a Type 1 seat belt in the rear center designated seating position.

Standard No. 214 Side Impact Protection: installation of door beams.

Standard No. 301 Fuel System Integrity: installation of a rollover valve in the fuel tank vent line between the fuel tank and the evaporative emissions collection canister.

Additionally, the petitioner states that the bumpers on the non-U.S. certified 1993 Mercedes-Benz 600SEC and 1994-1996 Mercedes-Benz S600 Coupe must be reinforced to comply with the Bumper Standard found in 49 CFR Part 581.

The petitioner further states that before the vehicle will be imported into the United States, its VIN will be inscribed on fourteen major car parts, and a theft prevention certification label will be affixed, in compliance with the Theft Prevention Standard in 49 CFR Part 541.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments on the petition described above. Comments should refer to the docket number and be submitted to: Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5109, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

All comments received before the close of business on the closing date indicated above will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Notice of final action on the petition will be published in the Federal Register pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A) and (b)(1); 49 CFR 593.8; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: July 19, 1996.

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Research and Special Programs Administration

[Notice No. 96-12]

Improving the Hazardous Materials Safety Program; Public Meeting Related to Regulatory Review and Customer Service

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting to be held in Sacramento, California to seek information from the public on regulatory reform and improved customer service for RSPA's hazardous materials safety program. This meeting is a continuation of the initial series of public outreach meetings held between April 19, 1995 and June 6, 1996. Interested persons are also reminded of a previously announced public meeting to be held in Atlanta, Georgia on September 12, 1996.

ADDRESSES: California State Department of Social Services Auditorium (Room 102), 744 P Street, Sacramento, California.

DATES: September 26, 1996 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Edmund J. Richards, Interagency Hazardous Materials Program Coordinator, (202) 366-0656; or Suezett Edwards, Training and Information Specialist, (202) 366-4900; Hazardous Materials Safety, RSPA, Department of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590-0001.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 4, 1995, President Clinton issued a memorandum to heads of departments and agencies calling for a review of all agency regulations to eliminate or revise those regulations that are outdated or in need of reform. In addition, the President directed front line regulators to " * * * get out of Washington and create grassroots partnerships" with people affected by agency regulations.

In response to the President's directive, RSPA performed an extensive review of the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR; 49 CFR Parts 171-180) and associated procedural rules (49 CFR Parts 106, 107 and 110). In April and July 1995, RSPA published notices in the Federal Register (60 FR 17049

and 60 FR 38888, respectively) that announced public meetings and requested comments on ways to improve the HMR and the kind and quality of services RSPA's customers expect. RSPA held 13 public meetings and received over 50 written comments in response to the Federal Register notices.

Based on its review of the HMR and on written and oral comments received from the public, RSPA has initiated eight separate rulemakings to eliminate or revise those regulations that have been identified as being outdated or in need of reform (Dockets HM-200, HM-207C, HM-207E, HM-216, HM-220A, HM-220B, HM-222A, HM-222B). Except for Docket HM-200, final rules have been issued as a result these rulemakings. These actions addressed various subjects such as training frequency, 24-hour emergency response telephone numbers, incident reporting, shipping papers, marking, labeling, and placarding, elimination of over 100 sections of the HMR, restructuring of the Hazardous Materials Table and Hazardous Substance Table, restructuring of the cylinder specifications and cylinder requalification requirements, and rail and highway modal requirements. In addition, RSPA has initiated a two-year pilot ticketing program to streamline and simplify enforcement of certain violations which do not have a direct impact on the safe transportation of hazardous materials, such as failure to register, obtain renewed exemptions in a timely manner, retain training records, and file incident reports. In the international area, RSPA has incorporated requirements for the transportation of radioactive materials that are compatible with the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and continued to adopt regulations towards harmonization with the United Nations Recommendations and other international regulatory bodies.

Significant actions have also been taken to improve management practices and operations. In 1995, RSPA implemented a toll-free number for obtaining assistance on the HMR, reporting potential violations of the regulations, and obtaining training materials. In response to comments to improve responses to inquiries, RSPA has made a commitment to respond to phone calls before the end of the next business day, and to mail training materials and publications in a timely manner.